

City of Edinburgh Council

**Edinburgh**  
Survey of Gardens and Designed Landscapes

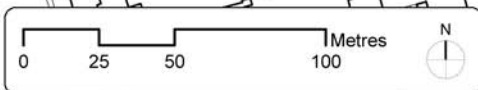
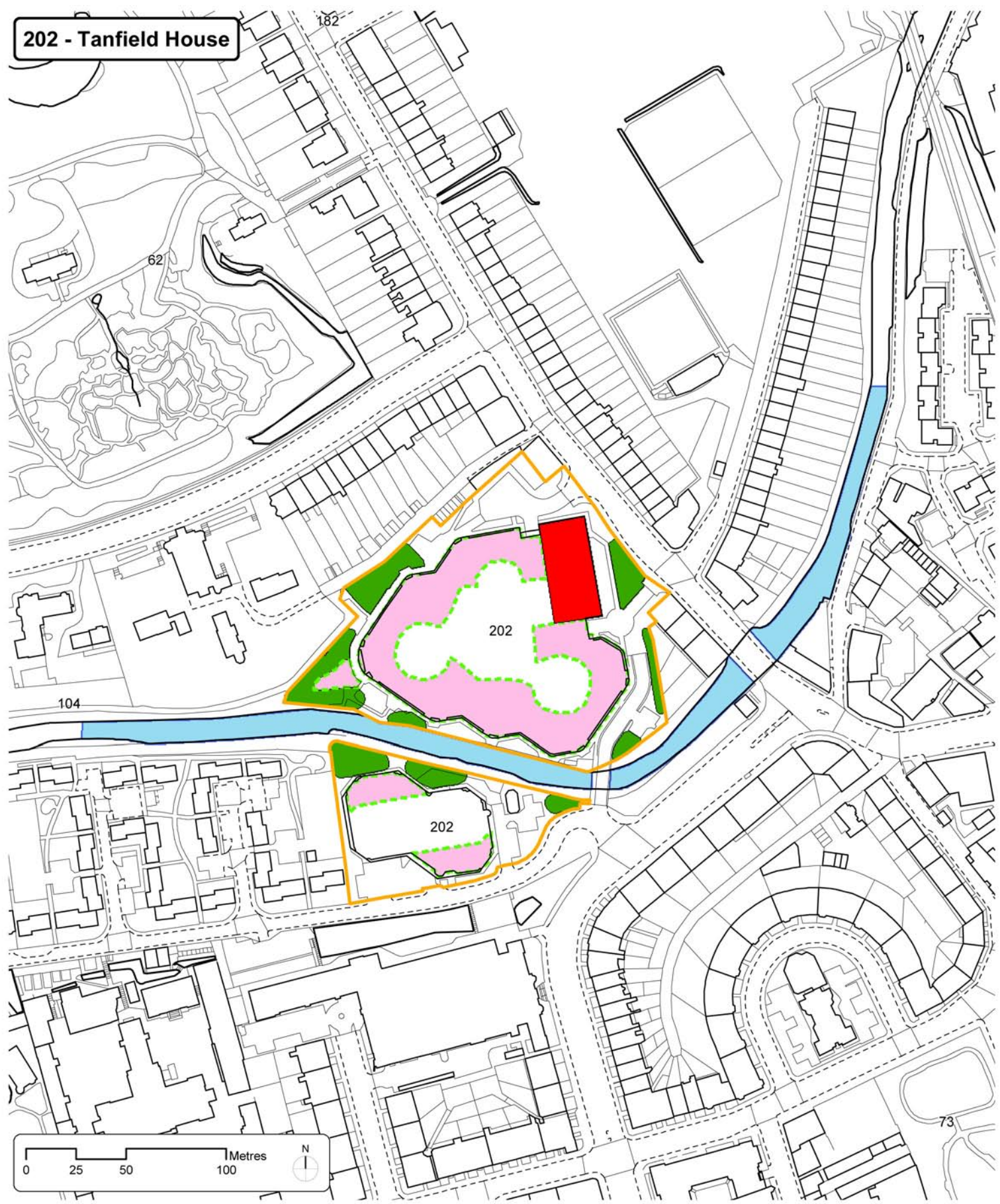
**202 Tanfield House**














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Survey visit: March 2008, January 2009

**202 - Tanfield House**



Key			
	Site boundary		Essential setting
	Ruined buildings		Site of former house
	Principal buildings		Main drive
	Gardens		Principal views or vista
	Water		Panoramic View
	Woodlands		Walled Garden
	Parkland		

**EDINBURGH**  
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

**SURVEY OF GARDENS AND  
DESIGNED LANDSCAPES**

Peter McGowan  
Associates with  
Christopher Dingwall

## 202 Tanfield House

Parish Edinburgh

NGR NT251 751

Owner The Carlyle Group & Bellhouse Joseph Developments Ltd; formerly Standard Life

Designations

Listing None

Inverleith Conservation Area

Urban Wildlife Site (Water of Leith channel)

### REASONS FOR INCLUSION

An office development on a restricted and sensitive site in the city – within a Conservation Area and next to the Water of Leith – that is notable for its built form being well adapted to its context and to local views and for its large roof garden.

### LOCATION, SETTING AND EXTENT

The Tanfield site is located north of the city centre and the New Town near Canonmills Bridge. The site is divided by the Water of Leith with the main part of the site on the west side of Howard Street, Inverleith Row (B901) and a smaller part situated south of the river overlooking Glenogle Road. It is close to the south boundary of the Royal Botanic Garden, separated by Inverleith Terrace, and the city centre can be seen from the RBG rock garden and other elevated positions over the Tanfield roofscape. It is also clearly visible in the view down Dundas Street. Site area 2.4ha.

### MAIN PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT

Mid-19th century; 1991; 2007-09.

### HISTORY OF LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT

The southern part of the Tanfield estate was taken over by industry from c1825 (Harris 595). For two decades in the 19th century, the site accommodated the Oil Gas Company (which made gas from whale oil) until it came to an end in 1839. Thereafter the surviving building, built in 1824 to a design by William Burn, was used for the first Free Church assembly in 1843, when the upheaval of the Disruption split the Church of Scotland. Thereafter, it was known as the Tanfield Hall and used as a wool store. Morrison and Gibb's printing works (1896) were located on another part of the same site.

Standard Life House was completed in 1991 on this 2 hectare site at a cost of £45m to accommodate 1,200-1,700 staff. Under the guidance of Allan Black of the Michael Laird Partnership, it was decided to build a low profile two-storey administrative offices building, which took up most of the ground available, and to utilise the rooftop as a garden. The staff dining room was on the top level and the garden was accessible from there, providing a fine outdoor space with good views. The open plan office spaces were arranged around three circular atria lit by three glazed domes at roof level, landmarks of Edinburgh's New Town. Other parts of the development included a new gas governor station and a data centre, both positioned on the south side of the Water of Leith, and a new bridge over the river leading to a basement car park providing most of the site's 300 car spaces.

The entrance was discretely positioned next to the retained façade of the old wool warehouse building that forms one part of the main building, with a frontage of trees beside Inverleith Walk.





Lancefield's map 1851

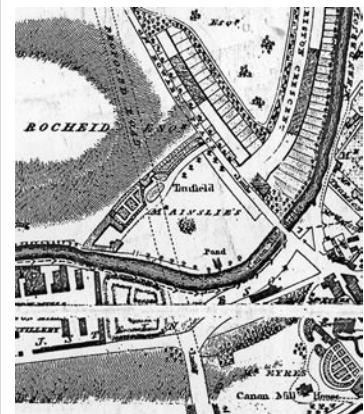
Standard Life sold the site in 2006 for office refurbishment following a period after the company had vacated the building when it was on the market for potential redevelopment for housing. During 2007-08 while this survey was being undertaken, the property has been refurbished and extended by The Carlyle Group & Bellhouse Joseph Developments Ltd, with Building Design Partnership as architect and landscape architect. Tanfield House is due to reopen with its refurbished roof garden in July 2009.

Tanfield has been redesigned flexibly to create seventeen self-contained office suites in a range of permutations up to and including the entire development of 17,742 sq.m. Each suite will be accessed through a 78m long atrium from an impressive double height reception area. The heart of the development is an internal street that provides a communal amenity area.

The roof garden remains a key feature of the refurbishment and will provide 3,054 sq.m of gardens overlooking the Water of Leith, including dedicated and communal areas.

**Maps and Graphic Evidence**

John Ainslie's map of 1804 shows Tanfield as open ground with a small house on the north belonging to *Mr Galloway*. It is on the north edge of the developed New Town in a locality of haughs beside the Water of Leith with some large houses and their grounds, and a distillery, but otherwise undeveloped. Robert Kirkwood's map of 1817 shows the site belonging to *Mr Ainslie* but with little change although a line of a *Proposed Road* runs through it, aligned on Dundas Street. Lancefield's fine map of 1851 shows industrial buildings and what appear to be two houses with well-planted gardens, but no Tanfield Hall. The 1st edition Ordnance Survey maps surveyed in 1852 show similar information. The 1876-77 OS maps show *Wool Stores* either side of Tanfield Lane including the present retained building and five gasometers to the west, with three more on the



Kirkwood's map 1817



Data Centre and gateway to bridge from Glenogle Road near Brandon Terrace

Tanfield House main entrance  
2008



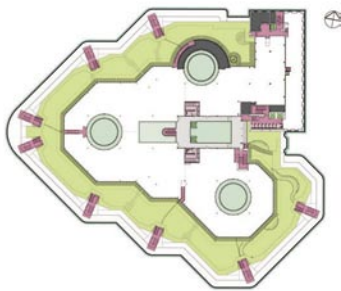
Glenogle Road part of the site. The 1893-94 map shows little change apart from *Printing Works* and *Tanfield Bond* occupying the former wool store buildings.

## COMPONENTS OF THE DESIGNED LANDSCAPE

### Architectural Features

#### Tanfield House

Described by McKean in 1992 soon after it opened as 'Large administrative offices gently slumbering in glen of Water of Leith, marked only by glazed domes. Entered from Howard Street past Gerald Laing's strenuous bronze *Axis Mundi*; buildings disposed as three top-lit, stone, glass and lead quasi-octagons grouped around the service core and a grand staircase. Lush roof gardens. Stained glass by Patrick Ross Smith. Data Centre a smaller clone over the water.'



Tanfield House, plan at roof  
garden level

Tanfield Hall is a simple classical three storey building of fourteen bays marked by pediments with chimneys centrally and near each end of the main east façade, in grey sandstone with slate roof.

#### Drives and Paths

The large footprint of the administration building leaves very little outdoor space at ground level, apart from that required for servicing and cleaning. The main entrance



Tanfield House with façade of  
Tanfield Hall on right





Roof garden 1991

is a pedestrian approach from Howard Street along a short broad walk featuring the *Axis Mundi* sculpture and is positioned at the junction of the old warehouse facade and new structure. The principal vehicular route is over the bridge crossing the Water of Leith from Glenogle Road near its junction with Brandon Terrace, which leads to basement level car parks and service areas. Another vehicular entrance services the north side of the building via a iron-gated entrance on Howard Street. The Data Centre is separately accessed from Glenogle Road.

**Roof Garden**

At 1.5 acres, this was ‘the largest roof garden in Europe’ (Urquhart, 131), designed by the Landscape Team of Michael Laird Partnership. The building was designed with the roof garden in mind and the extra weight of the roof accommodated in the building structure.

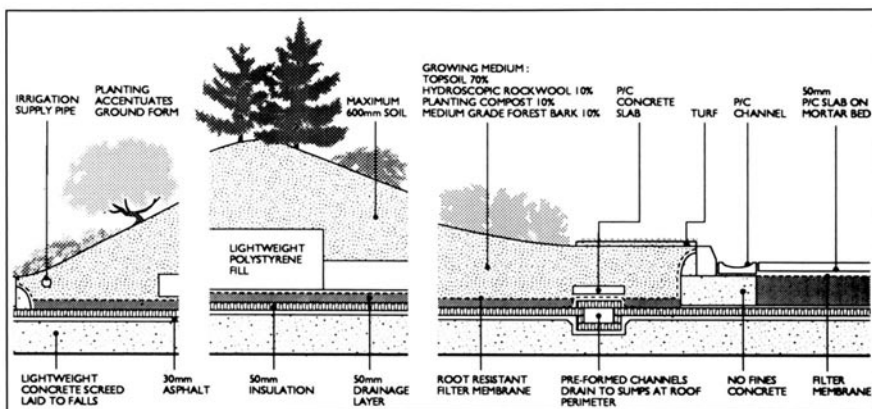
The garden is built over an inverted roof construction consisting of an asphalt membrane overlain by interlocking insulation boards. The layout includes grass and paved sitting areas subdivided by extensive shrub beds. Paths are necessary for servicing the perimeter of the roof and the atrium plant rooms, but otherwise the amount of paving was kept to a minimum. Both pavings and lawns reflect the plan form of the domes. Specimen shrubs were used for local interest at sitting areas.

The garden originally had 70 varieties of plants and 14,000 individual plants; many of them evergreen with a high proportion of Mediterranean plants. Hebes (from New Zealand) and Yuccas also thrived. Cold drying winds proved far less damaging than the hot air expelled from the heating systems. Phormium fails here, although it performs well on other high, windy sites around Edinburgh.

In addition to the main roof garden of the administration building, the Data Centre has two planted roof terraces to the north and south.



Roof garden dining room terrace 1991



Roof garden, roof garden construction cross-section (Michael Laird Partnership, c1990)



Proposals plan for replanting  
of roof garden, BDP 2009

According to the Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan the roof garden is ‘... a good example of how green roof technology can mitigate the effects of development in a sensitive area in terms of biodiversity and visual and sustainable urban drainage system issues...’ (EBAP 4.55)

#### Roof Garden Replanting 2009

Under the 2007-09 refurbishment, the roof garden is to be renewed and replanted following the original planting palette closely. The following shrubs are included in the planting proposals prepared by BDP where new plants are required: bamboos (*Arundinaria vividistrata*, *Sasa veitchii*), Ceanothus, dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera*), groundcover cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster dammeri*), *Euonymus fortunei* ‘Emerald Gold’, dwarf broom (*Genista lydia*), various hebes, hypericum, various junipers, New Zealand holly (*Olearia macrodonta*), dwarf spruces and pines, Gaultheria, low growing laurels, selected rhododendrons, shrub roses, rosemary, *Senecio greyi*, spiraeas, snowberry, *Viburnum davidii* and yuccas, together with some herbaceous plants, including Artemisia, irises and *Sysyrium*, and bulbs (tulips and crocuses).

#### Other Planting

The very limited space between the building and site boundary restricts planting to a very narrow fringe of shrub planting and occasional trees along the Inverleith Terrace Lane (north) boundary, beside the Water of Leith and beside Glenogle Road. A grass frontage between Howard Street and the warehouse façade features a small block of about twenty lime trees.

#### Memorial Plaque

A plaque mounted on a sandstone boulder in front of Tanfield Hall reads ‘Tanfield Hall – The first assembly of the Free Church of Scotland was held here on 18th May 1843 and in the same hall the Union of Succession and Relief Churches was consummated 13th May 1847’.



Roof garden 1991

### Views and Vistas

Views from the New Town and the Royal Botanic Garden were significant in determining the form of the building and so are important features of the site, both in terms of the outward views for users of the roof garden and offices, and inwards views such as those from the RBG Rock Garden and downhill northwards along Dundas Street. The buildings and their roof and ground level planting are also significant in local ground level views, such as from Canonmills Bridge.

View north down Dundas  
Street

### PUBLIC ACCESS

Commercial building with no formal public access.

### FUTURE MANAGEMENT POTENTIAL

Although replanting of the roof garden was incomplete at the time of this survey report, the high quality of the refurbishment of the offices gives the confidence that the roof garden will continue to be a valued feature of the development and will be well maintained in the future.

View of Tanfield House from  
Canonmills bridge

### ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

#### Overall

A commercial office development that is significant for its built form being well adapted to its context and local views and for its large roof garden, said to be 'the largest roof garden in Europe' soon after its completion. At the same time it demonstrates the vagaries of commercial buildings and financial institutions, being vacated within 15 years by its original owners for whom it was purpose-built and converted to alternative office uses.

#### Work of Art

Some

#### Historical

Some

#### Horticultural / Arboricultural / Sylvicultural

High

#### Architectural

Some

#### Scenic



High

**Nature Conservation**

Some

**Archaeological**

None

**Recreational**

High

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### Sources – Primary

#### Maps

Ainslie, *Old and New Edinburgh and Leith with the Proposed Docks* 1804

Kirkwood, *Plan of the City of Edinburgh and its environs* 1817

Lancefield, *Johnston's Plan of Edinburgh & Leith in 1851* 1851 NLS

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NLS            National Library of Scotland [www.nls.uk](http://www.nls.uk)

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